

# **BARRINGTON FIRE & RESCUE**

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*"Our family helping yours"*

Rick Walker  
Fire Chief

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Asst. Fire Chief

## **2021 Budget Cover letter**

With a staff of 30 call members, 3 full-time, and 4 part-time Firefighter/EMT's. Barrington Fire & Rescue proudly protects its 9,000 + residents and guests located on 49 square miles of mixed residential, commercial and forest lands with ample lakes and trails for recreational purposes. We respond to over 1000 calls for service each year to protect our residents and over a 1-billion-dollar property tax base.

About 20 years ago we started to experience an increase in call volume, particularly with EMS calls and a decrease in available volunteer responders, especially during the day. We began to provide financial incentives to our volunteers with the Ambulance, with limited success. We soon began to realize that we would need to do more, so in 2007 we hired our first full-time Fire Chief and in 2008 our first full-time Firefighter/EMT. This provided much needed support to our sparse daytime crews. In 2011 we began to provide a stipend to our Firefighters, but we still struggled with daytime support. In 2017 we added a third full-time Firefighter/EMT and currently we provide coverage of 2 people for 12 hours a day 7 days a week and 3 people 10 hours a day M-F. In 2016 we implemented an EMS On-Call system in which we pay 2 EMT's (Emergency Medical Technician) to be available 6pm-6am every day. We now also are staffing one-person overnight Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday night, we compliment them with an on-call firefighter and EMT. We recently began the process of adding another per-diem Firefighter/EMT on Saturday and Sunday to have 3 people on duty 7 days a week from 6a-6p. We expect full implementation by the end of 2020. In 2020 the town made a very generous investment in wages for all our employees and call members. All these changes have made a positive impact on our ability to provide quality emergency services. We have come to the realization that the volunteer Fire & EMS service will not be able to continue as they have in the past. This is not a unique problem to the Town of Barrington, every community in Strafford county except for Madbury, Middleton and New Durham have paid staff on hand every day some 24 hour a day.

Some issues that attribute to the decline of the volunteer system include

- Lack of time for people to volunteer because of work and family commitments.
- Loss of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> shift jobs in the area.
- Loss of company supported volunteer work release programs.
- Constant training requirements that take away from family time.
- Increased call volume.
- Lack of 'Exciting' calls.
- A changing generation that does not put the same emphasis on volunteering that their parents and Grandparents did.

When you add a number of these factors together you begin to see why we must make changes in how we do business to meet the demands of the job. There is a fine line associated with needs of the town, and its ability to pay for them. I am extremely thankful that over the years the Select-board, Town Administrator, Advisory Budget Committee, and Residents have recognized the need to increase Fire & EMS services, and for our part we have tried to incrementally increase services.

We have been working toward 24-hour staffing, while I believe that we still should be working in that direction, we have seen a bigger need for additional daytime staffing. In 2021 we will be looking at this issue with an eye toward having a plan in place for FY 2022. We have applied for a SAFER Grant to hire 2 more F/T Firefighter/EMT's we should hear something one way or the other before the end of the year.

2020 was a very challenging year for us the Covid Pandemic caught everyone off guard. Our members stepped up to the task adjusted how we operated, and we kept everyone safe. There will be areas of the budget that will be under spent some because federal funds were made available, and some because of not knowing how bad things were going to be financially I delayed adding per-diem staffing and making purchases that were not essential until we could get a feel for how things were going.

The FY 2021 budget represents a very modest increase of a little over .008% most tied to employee costs and contractual obligations. 82% of this budget is personnel costs.

If you have any questions, feel free to give me a call.

Rick Walker